

# Commission on Human Rights

## **Kentucky honors National Hispanic Heritage Month from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15.**

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In 1968, U.S. President Lyndon Johnson proclaimed National Hispanic Heritage Week for the period beginning Sept. 15. In 1989, the U.S. Congress expanded the observance to a one-month celebration. This observance provides a focused opportunity to celebrate Hispanic-American contributions to the nation, learn important statistics, and gain information about Hispanic-American culture and issues of concern.

As Kentuckians honor National Hispanic Month, the following are statistics concerning Hispanics in the U. S. and Kentucky:

- The U. S. Census American Community Survey reports that:
- 54 million Hispanics live in the U.S., and there are 132,000 Hispanics living in Kentucky. In 2010, the U.S. had the second largest Hispanic population in the world. Only Mexico (120 million) had a larger Hispanic population than the U.S.
- Hispanics accounted for 17 percent of the nation's total population in 2012.
- 64.4 percent of Hispanics in the U.S. were born here.
- In 2007, there were 2.3 million businesses in the U.S. owned by Hispanics and Hispanic-Americans. These businesses generated \$350.7 billion dollars in receipts.
- Nationally, Hispanic-Americans comprised 7 percent of voters in 2010.
- 38.3 million U.S. residents who were 5-years of age and older spoke Spanish as their first language at home in 2012.
- 1.2 million Hispanic-Americans were veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces in 2012.
- The median income of American Hispanic households in 2012 was \$39,000.

During the last 12 years, the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights has worked closely with Hispanic communities throughout the state. The commission provides a number of civil rights-related educational programs to assist them in understanding their civil rights and also how to comply with these important laws. The commission collaborates with other organizations that assist Kentucky-Hispanics and other immigrants and refugees in a variety of ways.

There has been an increase of Hispanic students taking courses that teach English as a second language in order to learn about the English language. The GED Testing Service reports that 337 of 465 Hispanic GED students earned their high-school equivalency GED diplomas in 2012. The Pew Research Center (see <http://www.pewhispanic.org/states/state/ky/>) reports that 26,000 Hispanic students are enrolled from Kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grades in Kentucky public schools.

In 2007, Hispanic-American-owned businesses accounted for 1.1 percent of the 337,600 businesses in Kentucky. Within the state, Hispanic-American-owned businesses are most prominent in the cities of Louisville and Lexington.

Through its Kentucky Hispanic community outreach and through collaboration with other community service organizations that assist Hispanic Kentuckians, the commission has learned that several Hispanic Kentuckian families report living in fear of family separation. Nationally, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement deported 343,391 immigrants in 2013. Ninety-three percent of these were men. Hispanics, on a national level, report to news and other sources that, as a result, mothers were left by themselves to care for their children.

There is a recent challenge with unaccompanied children crossing to the U.S. from Central America. From Jan. 1 to July 31, 2014, the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement reports that 37,477 unaccompanied children were released to family members across the country while they await immigration proceedings. Of those, 287 have been released to family members in Kentucky.

The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights is the state government authority that enforces the Kentucky Civil Rights Act, and, through its affiliation with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, enforces federal civil rights laws.

The Kentucky Civil Rights Act makes it illegal to discriminate against people in the areas of employment, financial transactions, housing and public accommodations. Discrimination is prohibited in the aforementioned areas based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, and disability. In employment, discrimination is further prohibited on the basis of age (40-years and over) and on the basis of tobacco-smoking status. In housing, discrimination is further prohibited based on familial status, which protects people with children in the household under the age of 18-years old, and it protects women who are pregnant. It is also a violation of the law to retaliate against a person for complaining of discrimination to the commission.

For more information, contact the commission at 1.800.292.5566. For information about the commission and civil rights, visit the website at [www.kchr.ky.gov](http://www.kchr.ky.gov)

For news about civil rights and information pertaining to protected classes, visit the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights Facebook and Twitter sites. Directly link to the sites from the commission website address listed above.